



MINUTES

GEORGIA LAND CONSERVATION PROGRAM Fourth Quarter Council Meeting December 3, 2009 - 9:30 AM

Call To Order

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order.

Present at the meeting were:

Council Members: Steve Stancil, Chairman, John Bembry, Stacy Patton, Mike Beatty, Chris Clark, Paul Michael, and Brent Dykes.

Approval of the Minutes

Chairman Stancil presented minutes from the September 3, 2009 GLCP meeting for approval. Chris Clark made a motion seconded by Mike Beatty to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Program Update and Budget Status

Curt Soper stated that 136,006 acres have been permanently protected since inception of the program; 68 grants/loans totaling 89,076 acres protected and 136 certified tax credit projects totaling 46,930 acres. The state's investment is \$73 million. All project have been executed that the Council has approved.

Curt Soper stated that he is hopeful of a good outcome with the GLCP Budget appropriation but also aware of revenue shortfalls and the overall budget situation. Expects to have discussion of legislation to make the existing conservation tax credit transfereable in some fasion. The following is a summary of tax credits issued to date:

- Donations certified in 70 Counties
- 46,930 acres permanently conserved
- 136 applications approved/certified
- Acreage under conservation easement in Georgia has increased by over 100% since 2006 (131,000 to approx. 270,000)
- Recent trend of tax credit applications as a result of foreclosure crisis
- Georgia one of 13 States with conservation tax credit program and 4 states allow earned credit to be transferred (VA, SC, CO, NM)

2010 Land Conservation Countil Meeting Dates

Curt stated that the following dates are being proposed for the 2010 Council meetings: March 4, 2010, June 10, 2010, September 2, 2010 and December 2, 2010.

Presentation from Yukon Property Consultants

Walter Hall and Mark Sofge with Yukon Properties presentated how they work with banks and other landowners that have forclosed properties to donate the properties into conservation or have conservation easements added to the property in exchange for tax incentives.

Report on Conservation Easement Donations

Curt Soper stated that out of the \$400,000 available to reimburse agencies for costs associated with donated conservation easements, all but \$44,259 has been requested by agencies and Council members will be kept updated. The State expects to have 11 conservation easement donations close by end of December. Curt reviewed the 11 projects with Council members. The Department of Natural Resources is also working with Georgia Power on a couple of properties that will be donated to the State. There have been 20,208 acres permanently protected in the fourth quarter with out any loan or grant fund expenditures. Chris Clark asked about the scoring system on the conservation easements that the Council does not vote on. If a project only scores 40 points does that mean that they don't receive state funds, what is the cut off? Curt stated that the Council allocated \$400,000 for expenses incurred when an easement is donated and up to now it has been first come first serve. There may be some reason the state would say no to someone that wanted to donate an easement but if the state is interested in the prooerty we had not been using the score. The Council did request staff to score each project in order to get an idea of their quality when applying GLCP criteria. Chris Clark stated that he would like staff to review and set up criteria for easement donation projects that might receive funds without Council review and approval. Staff was asked to develop criteria for the next Council meeting that can be used in the future such that projects that score under a certain level would receive the tax credit but not the limited due diligence funding that the Council has. Curt stated staff will work on developing the criteria. Dr. Bembry stated that it should also be based on true transaction costs. Dr. Bembry also asked about the status of Conservation Plan documents for the agricultural parts of a property that is having an easement placed on it and donated to the State. Brent Dykes stated that the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation commission partners with the federal NRCS agency to work with landowners to complete their Conservation Plan.

Report on Georgia Land Conservation Website

Andrew Szwak stated that the GLCP continues to see interest in its website, and we are now having more people visit the site than we did last year. The website usage is up more during the legislative session January – April, which is when the largest number of users visit the site. Between September and October of 2009, our usage is continuing to increase, so more folks are learning what we are all about. The tax credit page is visited very frequently. Our Facebook site is now up and working and we have 30 or 40 fans. Curt stated that we are receiving regular phone calls regarding conservation easements and tax credits.

Emerging Issues

There were no new emergining issues presented.

Next meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2010.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:27 a.m.

Kim Yawn, Senior Executive Assistant

Phil Foil, Executive Director